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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2744
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5142
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2886
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2751
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3386
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3511
RHMFISS/CDR USTRANSCOM SCOTT AFB IL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000550

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/30/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: THY ASKS FOR ASSISTANCE ON TECHNICAL
ISSUES IN ORDER TO INCREASE OVERFLIGHT

REF: ASHGABAT 0469 AND PREVIOUS

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Classified By: Charge Richard Miles for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: During an April 30 meeting with DATT, Turkmen State Civil Aviation officials asked for U.S. assistance in four areas, which would allow Turkmenistan to raise the blanket overflight cap: get the Afghanistan to expand the flight altitude range and routes for Turkmen civilian aircraft transiting that country; get Kabul air traffic control to communicate with Turkmenabat air traffic control on flights crossing the border; have U.S. aircraft transiting Turkmenistan airspace adopt certain safety procedures that would allow Turkmen air traffic control officials to manage the flights appropriately; and supply THY with four UHF radios so that they can communicate with U. S. aircraft. Regarding the overflight bill, THY officials said if MFA will write a note saying that the United States does not owe a fee, and charges would be dropped. During an April 29 meeting with Charge, Deputy Foreign Minister Hajiyeu promised to work together to avoid denying overflight to VIP planes. END SUMMARY.

OVERFLIGHT - SAFETY AND TECHNICAL ISSUES

12. (C) DATT met April 30 with Turkmen State Civil Aviation (THY) officials to discuss an increase to the blanket overflight cap, a bill for \$30,000 for overflight fees in 2007 and 2008, and the recent denial of overflight for the USTRANSCOM commander and the ISAF commander. THY Deputy Chairman, Kovus Charriyev, discussed four technical areas, where the Turkmen would like USG assistance. Charriyev said Turkmenistan had signed a commercial overflight agreement with Afghanistan, but U.S. military needs had taken precedence. Therefore, when Turkmen Airways flights transit Aghanistan they are restricted to a certain altitude and certain routes. If THY could expand the altitude range and the number of routes, it would allow an increase in throughput. Charriyev said this commensurate increase in civilian air traffic would allow the Turkmen to increase the U.S. overflight cap.

13. (C) THY Head of Air Traffic Control Ali Amanovich said that Turkmenabat air traffic control has had trouble communicating with their counterparts at Kabul air traffic control. When planes transiting Turkmenistan air space cross the Afghanistan border, there is supposed to be a hand over to Kabul air traffic control. However, Amanovich asserted, the Afghans only answer when they want. In addition, Kabul does not alert Turkmenabat to U.S. aircraft approaching the Turkmenistan border, and the Turkmen often only know about them when they are picked up by Turkmenistan air defense radar. Amanovich said the Turkmen want the Afghans to respond to their calls and to alert them of planes approaching the Turkmen border.

14. (C) Amanovich said there were also safety concerns with the U.S. aircraft that overfly. THY has safety regulations, which allow air traffic control to be able to manage flights appropriately. For example, THY does not want flights to be closer than ten minutes apart. In addition, U.S. aircraft often fly at such low altitudes that air traffic control cannot see them and only Turkmenistan air defense radar can pick them up. Amanovich wanted U.S. help in implementing procedural changes that would better promote safety and wanted four UHF radios that would allow air traffic control to talk to U.S. planes. DATT asked Amanovich for specific list of safety concerns that he can pass on to DoD.

OVERFLIGHT BILL - IT CAN GO AWAY

15. (C) Regarding the outstanding overflight bill, a bookkeeper from THY explained that the International Air Transport Association (IATA) Convention mandates that their

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books must balance and they must account for every fee which they charge. Moreover, he said, the United States is the only country that still has not paid this over flight bill. Nevertheless, Turkmenistan does not charge overflight fees for humanitarian flights. If the planes are shown to be have been humanitarian (i.e., the diplomatic notes state they were carrying humanitarian cargo), those charges would be corrected. For the VIP flights, if MFA will write a note forgiving the bill, the United States will not be charged.

16. (C) DATT explained the United States policy is not to pay for overflight for U.S. Government planes. This is universal and not restricted to one country or region. He also raised the denial of overflight to USTRANSCOM Commander General McNabb and ISAF Commander General McKiernan. He said it would not help bilateral relations if the decision to deny overflight to General McKiernan's May 4 flight is not reversed.

DENIAL OF OVERFLIGHTS

17. (C) The Charge met April 29 with Deputy Foreign Minister Hajiyeu regarding the denial of overflight to General McNabb's flight on April 28. Charge emphasized the lack of understanding for this incident in Washington in light of DAS Krol's conversation with Foreign Minister Meredov on April 24, where Meredov promised that the overflight bill would no longer be an issue. Hajiyeu took this point and reiterated that the Embassy and Ministry needed to work together closely to minimize such friction. He encouraged us to be in close contact with the relevant officials in the Consular Department, the Americas Desk or with the Assistant to the Minister when problems arose.

18. (C) Hajiyeu apologized for what happened. He promised to talk to Meredov that evening and relay information on the May 4 flight of General McKiernan. He said they would work so that there would not be a repeat of what had happened to General McNabb and so that General McKiernan could overfly Turkmenistan. He said there is time before May 4 to resolve

this issue, and promised that MFA would communicate with THY.

Hajiyev explained that THY is narrowly focused on its area of responsibility, and therefore was fixated on the \$30,000 bill. However, MFA has a broader perspective.

19. (C) COMMENT: The discussion with THY provides for a way ahead on both the overflight cap and the overflight bill. It's too bad it has taken so long for the Turkmen to propose practical solutions to these problems. Although there was no discussion of how much the cap could be raised, an agreement that technical fixes would allow an increase permits us to negotiate exact numbers in the future. END COMMENT.

MILES